

CA 2090 CO
2000

On 9-24-99 I responded with Dep. Kozal to Camp Blackhawk on a possible arson complaint. We arrived and searched the area after inspecting the cafeteria. A request was made for a detective and Det. Leonard started heading to the scene. Prior to his arrival the entire area surrounding the burned cafeteria was searched for footwear impression leading to or from the building and for a container that might have been used to carry the fire inducing chemical. Two footwear impression of unknown origin were found in the sand approximately 30 to the south of the S/W corner of the building. The tread design of every fire personnel at the scene and of the complainant, [REDACTED] were inspected. None matched. Castings were made of the impressions and picked up after they dried.

TOT Evidence

87199 Robillard
Reviewer 84140

R/O was called to the scene of a fire at Owassippi Scout Camp. The fire occurred at Camp Black Hawk, which is located off Owassippi Road northeast of Russell Road.

BUILDING:

Tongue and groove structure with an asphalt roof. The structure sits on a cement slab on the west portion and has a basement of cinder block under the dining area of the east end. There are several camp vehicles and all the recreational equipment is in this area. The upstairs dining area has several large windows and four double entrance/exit doors which have crash bars attached and a dead bolt lock.

The building is divided into three portions on the upper floor. The east side has a full length deck with steps at both ends. There are two double doors off the deck which lead into the dining area. There are also large windows that overlook the lake. Once in the open dining hall, there are two entrance/exit doors on the west side of the dining hall. Also located on the west side of the dining hall are three serving windows and an in door and out door to the kitchen area. The kitchen area is a large open room with sinks on one end, and stove and freezer/refrigerator units. The doors on the north side lead outside. A hallway leads back on the south side, going west. Off this hallway are two bathrooms. The hallway leads into an office area with an outside entrance. The office area also has an inner door leading into the trading post area, which also has an outside entrance.

FIRE LOCATIONS:

Dining Room, office, and trading post.

DINING ROOM:

R/O observed charring on the north end wall by the window. There are portable dining tables folded standing at this end of the room. R/O observed pour pattern on the north wall, continuing over the tables and around to the west wall. The pour was on the floor and lower portion of the wall. The pour continued past the entrance/exit door over the top of a non-folding table to the area of the serving windows where the pour stopped.

A second pour started within a few feet. This one went along the floor in front of the west wall to the entrance/exit doors of the kitchen and continued along the floor and wall until reaching the south wall. The pour continued on the floor and south wall and then over another set of folded tables that were against the south wall at the east end. Burn patterns were seen and photographed along this wall. Samples taken from this area are:

#1 - Wall trim board from north of the northwest entrance/exit doors of the dining room.

#2 - Piece of wood off floor in front of south wall of dining room.

#3 - Table from dining room west wall north of serving windows. A sterile gauze was used to take samples from table top.

#6 - A truck tail lamp from the floor in front of south wall.

All the samples came from an area that the fire dog Grizzly made a hit on.

Nothing appeared to be disturbed in the kitchen and bathroom areas.

OFFICE AND TRADING POST:

The pour started at the entrance/exit door and went along the west wall and directly onto a poster hanging on the wall and over the counter top and along the west wall by the desk. The pour then continued into the trading post area over the counter to along the floor behind it and on the west wall and west wall cabinet to the entrance/exit door. All pours of flammable liquid were ignited, but burned themselves out. Sample #4, taken in the office area, was taken from the counter top with a sterile gauze. Sample #5, taken in the trading post, was taken from the counter top with a sterile gauze.

POWER:

R/O learned that all power to this building had been turned off prior to the fire when the building had been winterized at least one week earlier. All water to the building had also been turned off. Photographs of the power circuit breaker box were taken. Electrical was eliminated as being the cause of the fire.

R/O checked the building for entry points and found no forced entry, indicating that a door may have been left unlocked or a key was used for entry. R/O was told by camp staff that there is a poor accounting for keys to the property.

BUILDING SETTING:

The building is set on a lake north of Owassippi Road. There is a locked gated entrance point at Owassippi Road. The padlock had to be cut by Owassippi staff, because someone poured a substance appearing to be super glue in the lock. The lock is evidence sample #7. The building is not visible from the roadway and anyone in this area of the building would have enough time without being detected. Owassippi staff stated that at the close of camp and shut down, the building would be checked approximately once a week.

INTERVIEW WITH [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] stated that this is the first year he has worked year round in the seven years he has worked at Owassippi. He stated that they had worked on the dump truck and he had taken a load of metal to the recycle yard. Upon returning, they decided to haul a couple of loads of sand to the beach area in front of Black Hawk. When they arrived at the gate, they noticed that something had been put in the lock and he could not get his key in to open it. He called maintenance and [REDACTED] came out with bolt cutters and cut the lock.

After dumping his load of sand and pulling out from the beach along the north side of the building, he stated that he smelled smoke and stopped the truck to investigate. [REDACTED] looked up on the north side of the building and saw a small amount of smoke coming from around the window. Upon further investigation, he found the fire damage on the inside and called [REDACTED] again. [REDACTED] then called the fire department and Dalton Fire responded.

INTERVIEW WITH [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] stated that [REDACTED] had called and stated that he was unable to put his key into the lock on the gate at Black Hawk. [REDACTED] stated that this was a common occurrence and he took the bolt cutters with him and cut the lock. [REDACTED] went in with the sand and [REDACTED] went back to the shop. [REDACTED] stated that the next call came in and it was [REDACTED] telling him to call the police and fire department because the building was on fire. [REDACTED] stated that [REDACTED] said it looked like

arson.

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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT PRUDEN (Camp Director)

Rob stated that there are currently two full time and two part time employees. Two employees are finished at the end of September.

Rob stated that the building has been closed and the water and power shut off. The building is used in the winter to store the camp equipment and vehicles in the basement area. He estimates that one million dollars of equipment is stored in the basement. Rob stated that the building is checked no more than once a week; he could not give the last time the building was checked. He stated that it is not a very secure building in the upper half because of all the doors and windows. Some of the doors are in poor condition and he felt that they possibly could be opened by pulling on them. However, he did say that at the end of the year the camp carpenter did work on the doors so that they would secure properly.

Rob stated that there has been a larger than average turn over of personnel all the way to the top of the organization. He stated that several bills for the camp are over due. He has received overdue notices on a regular basis since being there.

Rob stated that in the past there has been a problem with the Blue Lake community. The community does not like the signs stating "Chicago Area Council". Years ago the signs were changed because of the community protest. The signs have recently been changed back to "Chicago Area Boy Scout Council".

Rob stated that there are several keys out. The keys to the gate had been changed last year so keys to the gate prior to this time will not work.

Rob was asked if he suspected any staff or past staff and he stated he did not. He stated that he has no idea who could have done this.

R/O took photographs going clockwise of the building exterior. R/O observed the most extensive damage on the north wall of the dining room near the window. R/O photographed the interior of the building starting with the dining room, working toward the rear. Fire Marshall Grabinski was called to the scene and had his fire dog go through. The dog hit on several areas. Dep. Robillard did castings of unidentified foot impressions found at the scene.

10/5/99

RE-INTERVIEW WITH [REDACTED] (AT MCSD)

[REDACTED] stated that he was living at the camp in staff housing. On 9/23/99 there was a power outage around 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. [REDACTED] stated that there were no renters at the camp at the time. He felt that the only possible problem was making sure the generators kicked in for the water pumps. [REDACTED] stated that when the power did not come on he went to the maintenance building. He got into a camp truck and drove out and checked the generators; they were all fine. [REDACTED] stated that he drove to White Lake and Russell Roads and found the power was out all the way there. He stated that he turned around and drove north on Russell to Fruitvale then east on Fruitvale to Nichols. He went south on Nichols to Owassippi and west on Owassippi to Russell and back to the maintenance building where he made contact with [REDACTED]. R/O asked [REDACTED] if he noticed any vehicles along the way and he stated he believes he saw only one, on Fruitvale Road. He was sure about no one being on Owassippi.

R/O asked [REDACTED] if the gate to Black Hawk was open and he stated that he did not notice it. He stated that if it was, he would have noticed it. He stated that he did not drive back to Black Hawk.

R/O asked [REDACTED] how long he has worked for the camp and he said since the summer of 1995. From November of 1996 to May of 1997, he volunteered weekends. In September of 1997 he became seasonal staff full time, finishing in August of 1998. He was seasonal staff from February of 1999 through October of 1999. From February of 1999 to May of 1999 he was part time, working 20 hours. He went on full time in May through September 1, 1999, when he went back to part time. He was done on October 1, 1999. [REDACTED] stated that he had planned to work part time this fall and go to college. The cut in the budget put him out of a job and it was hard for him to have to go.

[REDACTED] stated that the camp has financial problems and many people have not been paid. He further stated that the food service is contracted to Glynn Ellen, Illinois, to Quest Management. When they left, some of the employees did not receive their last pay checks. The company hired several locals, many from the Progress Drive area.

[REDACTED] further stated that people doing business regularly with the camp were not paid. Among them, Brennen Oil, Gordon Foods, Pepsi, Standard Lumber, Tri-County Feed, and Howard Platt Lock Smith.

[REDACTED] stated that he saw a bill for Pepsi for \$12,000.

R/O asked [REDACTED] about fuel storage at the camp and he stated that all the cans are supposed to be kept in a storage shed behind the maintenance building, but they are not. Many times they are in the maintenance building. The fenced in area where the fuel tanks are have gates on both ends, which are never locked.

R/O asked [REDACTED] if he started the fire. He said no, that he would never do anything to hurt the camp, that he loved the camp.

R/O advised [REDACTED] that, according to evidence, it appeared that the fire had been started the night prior to discovery and that it is interesting that he was in the area of the fuel storage, and he is being laid off and does not feel he should be. He was also in the area of Camp Black Hawk when the fire was started and had no reason to be there.

R/O asked [REDACTED] if he would take a polygraph examination and he said that he did not know if he would, that he would have to think about it and call R/O.

[REDACTED] called R/O at 2:50 on this same date. He stated that he had heated words with Rob about his being let go prior to his interview at MCSD. He said that he said things that he should not have said.

The Muskegon Chronicle and the White Lake Beacon have been requested to post a notice of reward of \$5000.00 for information on the fire.

This investigation continues.

Det. T. Leonard, #6153

3/6/00

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R/O received a call from [REDACTED] who requested I schedule a polygraph for him on this complaint. A polygraph was scheduled for Friday, March 24, 2000 at 1:00 p.m. [REDACTED] was advised to be at this office at noon for transportation to the polygraph site.

Det. T. Leonard, #6153

11-19-1999 10:42am

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Officer had not heard back from [REDACTED] who had been requested to take a polygraph. Officer contacted [REDACTED] by TX. [REDACTED] stated that he was not going to take a polygraph test. [REDACTED] is my only suspect at this time. Officer will close the complainant at this time pending further information.

Closed

Terrance L. Leonard 6153
Reviewed 85146